

Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 126 (Site of Special Scientific Interest No. 6)

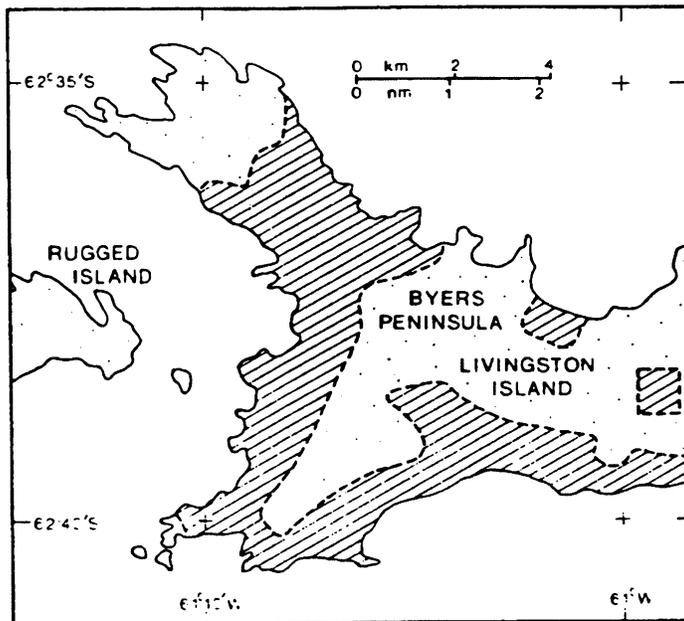
Byers Peninsula, Livingston Island, South Shetland Islands

This Site currently comprises three areas of varying shape and size on Byers Peninsula designated solely for their sedimentary and palaeontological interest. However, the peninsula is also of considerable biological and archaeological importance.

1. *Geographical location.* Byers Peninsula is an extensive, largely ice-free area at the western end of Livingston Island, South Shetland Islands, centred on lat 62°38'S, long 61°05'W.

2. *Management Plan*

i. *Description of site.* The site comprises the entire area of Byers Peninsula extending from the ice margin on the west side of Rotch Dome (to a point directly north of Stackpole Rocks) westwards to the west end of Ray Promontory. The littoral zone of the Peninsula is included within the Site. The nearby offshore islets and islands are not included in the Site. Most of the Site is low and undulating, below 100m altitude, except for Ray Promontory which has a more rugged topography, rising to over 200m at Penca Hill and Start Hill. Numerous volcanic plugs, lakes, pools and streams occur between Ray Promontory and the Rotch Dome ice field. Coastal areas often have broad beaches several hundred metres wide, with raised beaches behind.



ASPA 126
Map A*

ii. *Reason for designation.* The fossils found in this area provide evidence of the former link between Antarctica and the other southern continents. A long-term palaeontological research programme has been in progress since the mid-1960s. It is important to protect these Jurassic and Cretaceous rocks from being used as building materials or taken as souvenirs.

The site is of special biological importance. It has a sparse but diverse flora of both calcicolous and calcifuge plants and cyanobacteria associated with the lavas and basalts, respectively. Basaltic plugs are particularly well-vegetated. Several rare cryptogams and the two native vascular plants (*Colobanthus quitensis* and *Deschampsia antarctica*) occur at several sites. There are several coastal and inland lakes, the latter having a particularly important biota, including aquatic mosses, and serve as breeding sites for the midge *Parochlus steineni*, the only native winged insect in the Antarctic and with exceptionally restricted distribution. The only other Antarctic dipteran, the apterous *Belgica antarctica*, occurs in stands of wet moss.

The site is also unique in possessing the greatest concentration of historical sites in Antarctica, namely the remains of refuges, together with contemporary artefacts, and shipwrecks of early nineteenth century sealing expeditions.

It is important that both the biological and archaeological features are also afforded protection.

iii. *Outline of research.* A long-term geological and palaeontological research programme was established in 1964. The main objectives are the description of sediments and fossils found in this area. Botanical, zoological, limnological, ornithological and archaeological investigations have also been undertaken throughout the Site at various times since the late 1950s.

iv. *Date of expiry of designation.* 31 December 2001.

v. *Access points.* None defined.

vi. *Pedestrian and vehicular routes.* Vehicles should not enter the Site, except in an emergency. Helicopters should land only on unvegetated ground at least 500m from any bird or seal concentrations, or freshwater bodies.

vii. *Other kinds of scientific investigations which would not cause harmful interference.* Scientific research other than archaeological, biological and geological should be kept to a minimum.

viii. *Scientific sampling.* Samples of rocks or biological specimens should only be taken for compelling scientific purposes.

ix. *Other restraints.* Buildings and other facilities should not be erected in the Site. All non-human waste should be removed from the Site. No combustible waste should be incinerated within the Site. There should be no interference of any sealers' refuges (huts, caves, etc) nor removal of any associated artefacts (including implements, timbers, fabrics, etc) from these features or from the beaches. No skeletal remains of any animal should be moved within or removed from the Site.